



# SEQUOIA & KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

## & SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST/GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

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## Rangers in the park classroom

So close and yet so far....

On the rare occasions that park rangers get to visit valley classrooms, we are often shocked by what we hear:

"We live near the biggest trees in the world?"

"I've never been there."

"What is a national park?"

Just 50 minutes away by car, we meet children who have never seen what others cross the world to experience.

Towns around these parks are home to a huge number of diverse students whose family culture has no history with national parks.

Teachers work hard to get their classes to the parks for programs that we can offer during a few months of the school year. Buses cost money, however, and winter weather blocks them for months at time.

With limited instruction time to improve test scores, few hours can go toward field trips. As budgets tighten, fewer classes can make the trip. And fewer children make a personal connection with these vital national landscapes.

Without the hearts and minds of children, the future of national parks is in doubt. Who will care if park resources are safe? Who will choose to improve air quality, not only for themselves, but so that giant sequoias are not threatened by pollution? Who will count themselves the rightful heirs to "America's best idea" — our national parks?

And, of equal importance, without the parks, where will children find the inspiration, recreation, and natural space they need to be engaged, healthy citizens of the United States? Of this planet?

An amazing combination of people, park history, and social concerns offers one answer: Bring the parks to the children. Put rangers in the



*A pilot program of Rangers in the Classroom has already begun in 3rd and 4th grades at the elementary school in the town of Lindsey.*

classroom.

The plan has a good chance of success for several reasons:

- The National Park Service is endorsing 200 exciting projects in parks across the country - including our "Rangers in the Classroom."
- The projects require working with partners to accomplish the goal, and we have excellent groups on our team. The Sequoia Parks Foundation, Sequoia Natural History Association, Sequoia Riverlands Trust, and the Tulare County Office of Education are actively planning together.
- Projects are required to have matching financial support from outside government. The Sequoia Parks Foundation has started gathering donations to meet that condition.
- A park ranger with a Masters degree in Education is hard at work already, developing a trial program and testing it this school year. Her curriculum supports state standards, helping students to meet requirements and prepare for tests while they discover the park in their backyard.

- Inspired by national concern about the decreasing connection between children and nature, people want to help. And every one of you is needed and welcome.

This year's goal is to invest \$100,000 in Rangers in the Classroom. The Sequoia Parks Foundation is working hard to raise \$50,000 of that. REI and the National Park Foundation have signed on, but the main source must be public donations.

Learn more about Rangers in the Classroom and the groups dedicated, with your help, to seeing it happen. See [www.sequoiaparksfoundation.org](http://www.sequoiaparksfoundation.org) or call 1-559-565-3733. We can connect kids to parks!